

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY VALLETTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7418

C O N F I D E N T I A L VALLETTA 0611

DEPARTMENT REPEAT AS DESIRED

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, FR, IT, MT

SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR GUIDANCE FOR MINTOFF MEETING

1. SUMMARY. ITALIAN AMBASSADOR TELS ME THAT MANZINI HAS BEEN HERE THIS PAST WEEKEND AND AMONG OTHER THINGS TOLD MINTOFF HE SHOULD HAVE FRANK DIALOGUE WITH LOCAL U.S. AMBASSADOR. MINTOFF SKEPTICAL BUT SAID HE WOULD CALL ME IN. MANZINI ALSO REPORTEDLY TOLD MINTOFF THAT HIS STYLE AND TACTICS WITH THE ITALIANS AND FRENCH WERE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE TO HIS OWN INTERESTS. REQUEST GUIDANCE AS TO POINTS DEPARTMENT WISHES ME TO EMPHASIZE. END SUMMARY.

2. ITALIAN AMBASSADOR DA-RIN TOLD ME TODAY THAT SECRETARY GENERAL MANZINI OF ITALIAN MFA HAS BEEN HERE THIS PAST WEEKEND AS PRIVATE GUEST OF MAINTOFF. ACCORDING DA-RIN, MANZINI MADE FOLLOWING PONTs:

(A) MINTOFF SHOULD NOT UNDERESTIMATE FRENCH PARTICIPATION IN CURRENT DIALOGUE IF FOR NO OTHER REASON BECAUSE OF ITS POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE. THIS WAS MORE IMPORTANT THAN FINANCIAL AID WHICH MANZINI TOLD MINTOFF HE SHOULD NOT EXPECT FROM FRENCH
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BEYOND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND POSSIBLE FRENCH INVESTMENT. ITALIANS WERE "LONG SUFFERING" IN TERMS OF THEIR MALTESE EXPERIENCE BUT MINTOFF COULD NOT EXPECT THIS FROM FRENCH.

(B) IN RESPONSE TO MINTOFF'S OBSERVATION THAT BOTH QADHAFI AND BOUMEDIENE WERE COUNSELING HIM TO TAKE THE ARAB OPTION BECAUSE MALTA COULD NO LONGER COUNT ON THE EUROPEANS TO HELP,

MANZINI SUPPOSEDLY TOLD HIM THAT MINTOFF'S TACTICS OF CONSTANTLY FLAUNTING HIS ARAB OPTION (PARTICULARLY THE QADHAFI OPTION) WERE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE, ESPECIALLY WITH RESPECT TO THE GERMANS WHO MATTERED MORE THAN ANYONE ELSE IN ANY FUTURE EUROPEAN SUPPORT FOR MALTA.

(C) MINTOFF'S STYLE OF PUBLICLY ABUSING HIS EUROPEAN FRIENDS WAS IN ANY EVENT COUNTERPRODUCTIVE IN LIGHT OF MALTA'S CHANGED AND LESSENERD STRATEGIC SIGNIFICANCE.

(D) EUROPEANS COULD BE EXPECTED TO BE SLOW TO RESPOND TO MALTA'S NEEDS, BUT IF MINTOFF PAID GREATER REGARD TO HIS OWN STYLE AND TACTICS ITALY BELIEVES THAT SOMETHING CAN BE ARRANGED TO HELP BRIDGE THE SHORT-RANGE FINANCIAL GAP AFTER 1979, ASSUMING OF COURSE THAT GERMAN PARTICIPATION IS ASSURED.

(E) MINTOFF REQUEST FOR DIRECT FINANCIAL HELP TO COMPENSATE FOR UNEMPLOYED WORKERS WAS, HOWEVER, A TOTAL NONSTARTER AND MINTOFF SHOULD FORGET IT.

(F) MINTOFF SHOULD NOT EXCLUDE THE POSSIBILITY OF U.S. PARTICIPATING AS WELL, BUT THIS WOULD BE CONTINGENT ON MINTOFF ADOPTING A MORE MODERATE TONE THAT TOOK ACCOUNT OF MALTA'S CHANGED STRATEGIC SITUATION AND THE IMPORTANCE OF AMERICAN FREINDSHIP.

(G) IN THIS CONNECTION MANZINI TOLD MINTOFF THAT HE WAS NOT MAKING THE BEST USE OF THE CARD THAT MIGHT BE AVAILABLE IN A DIALOGUE WITH THE LOCAL AMERICAN AMBASSADOR WHOM HE ASSUMED TO BE AT LEAST OPEN-MINDED.

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3. DA-RIN TELLS ME THAT MINTOFF REFLECTED CONSIDERABLE SKEPTICISM ABOUT THE AMERICAN CONNECTION AND PARTICULARLY TO DEVOTING MUCH TIME TO A DIALOGUE WITH ME. MINTOFF REPORTEDLY SAID THAT ALL HE HEARS FROM THE LOCAL AMERICAN EMBASSY IS COMPLAINTS ABOUT ALTA'S ATTITUDE TOWARD AMERICAN INVESTMENT AND PARTICULARLY THE PHOENIX CASE, ON WHICH "HE WILL ABSOLUTELY NOT BUDGE." NONETHELESS, MINTOFF SAID HE WAS PREPARED TO GIVE A DIALOGUE A TRY AND WOULD CALL ME IN "THIS WEEK."

4. DA-RIN THEN PROCEEDED TO GIVE ME SOME ADVICE BASED ON HIS OWN EXPERIENCE OF HOW TO HANDLE MINTOFF, THE DETAILS OF WHICH MATTER LESS THAN THE FACT THAT THE ITALIANS HAVE NOW TAKEN THIS STEP TO HELP ENSURE THAT WE BECOME SUBSTANTIVELY ENGAGED IN A PROBLEM THAT THEY NO DOUBT SEE AS BECOMING FINANCIALLY LARGER THAN THEY CARE TO HANDLE.

5. COMMENT: I WOULD BE GRATEFUL FOR ANY GUIDANCE THE DEPARTMENT CHOOSES TO PROVIDE ME. I BELIEVE MY BEST POSTURE IS ONE OF BEING OPEN-MINDED TO ANYTHING MINTOFF HAS TO TELL ME, AVOIDING ANY ATMOSPHERE OF CONFRONTATION, BUT ALSO MAKING CLEAR OUR VIEW THAT ANY IMPROVED RELATIONSHIP HAS TO BE A TWO-WAY PROCESS. I WOULD AVOID ANY COMMITMENT OF ANY KIND ON FINANCIAL PARTICIPATION, MAKING CLEAR AT THE SAME TIME WE CONTINUE TO LOOK TO OUR EUROPEAN FRIENDS TO TAKE THE LEAD ON POST-1979 RELATIONSHIPS. I WOULD OF COURSE WELCOME BEING ABLE TO DELIVER A POSITIVE RESPONSE IN PRINCIPLE TO THE INVITATION TO HABIB. LAINGEN

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